

P 130849Z OCT 05
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0192
INFO ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 003341

NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/POUNDS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/12/2015
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAL](#) [SY](#) [LE](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: MGLE01: A/S WELCH MEETING WITH LEBANESE FOREIGN
MINISTER SALLOUKH

Classified By: JEFFREY FELTMAN, AMBASSADOR. REASON: SECTION 1.4 (B)

11. (C) Summary: On October 12, NEA A/S Welch, accompanied by Ambassador and PolChief (notetaker), met with Lebanese Foreign Minister Fawzi Salloukh at the Office of the Foreign Minister in Beirut. With respect to the UN Mehlis investigation into the murder of Rafiq Hariri, Salloukh said the GOL would be willing to send a written request to the UNSYG asking for extension of the Mehlis mandate to December 15. FM Salloukh spoke encouragingly of the results of his recent diplomatic efforts in the region and during his U.S. trip. Salloukh described the Lebanon-Syrian relationship as one evolving into a relationship based on mutual respect. He said his country's political class is holding its breath in anticipation of the report of UNIIIC Chief Detlev Mehlis. End summary.

Lebanon has strong support
internationally

12. (C) A/S Welch thanked Foreign Minister Salloukh for his helpful statements on his return from meetings in New York, in which Salloukh had portrayed positively Core Group efforts in support of Lebanese reform. The Foreign Minister had corrected inaccurate press reports that Lebanon was presented with specific conditions and timetables on which international assistance was to be conditioned. The Minister graciously accepted A/S Welch's remarks saying, "one can't trust what one reads in the press." The Minister explained that upon his arrival on Lebanese soil in late September, he taken the first opportunity to set the record straight on Lebanon's engagement with its friends in the international community. This was an important step in correcting the impressions and expectations of the Lebanese people. Salloukh said it was important to let people in Lebanon know that the measures discussed in New York were measures designed to help the Lebanese people, not hurt some other party, nor succumb to foreign dictates. Of his own role in New York, Salloukh said, "We carried out discussions in the service of our country."

13. (C) A/S Welch encouraged the Foreign Minister to view the United Nations as a partner in protecting Lebanon's sovereignty. All the measures undertaken by the UN Security Council speak of protecting and preserving Lebanese sovereignty. A/S Welch asked the Foreign Minister about the trip that he and the Prime Minister took to the UAE last week. Salloukh said that bilateral discussions centered on a review of Lebanese compliance with UN Security Council resolutions, and the overall economic situation in Lebanon. The Prime Minister also used the occasion to invite the UAE to participate in the proposed donor meeting to take place in Lebanon regarding international support for a Lebanese reform program.

14. (C) A/S Welch described his recent visit to Saudi Arabia, reassuring Salloukh that the Saudis were supportive of Lebanon's independence. He added that Egypt was also ready to support Lebanon and would be act as a good friend.

Turning to the larger regional context, A/S Welch told the Foreign Minister that he had held meetings with Mahmoud Abbas and Ariel Sharon. Abbas had assured A/S Welch that the Palestinians in Lebanon would behave as guests of the GOL. The Lebanese would be in charge of the security of refugee camps and no Palestinians would undertake any action that would undermine the security of Lebanon. Salloukh added that Abbas had spoken to Lebanese Prime Minister Siniora by phone, saying essentially the same thing, and adding that no Palestinian weapons would be allowed outside of the Lebanese refugee camps. Abbas also promised that the weapons inside of the camps would be "organized and placed under control." Ambassador Feltman noted that PM Siniora recently proposed Lebanese diplomat Khalil Maqaoui to lead a commission for the Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue. The Foreign Minister said he knew Maqaoui, who had spent five years at the UN, and was pleased to see him take the position. A/S Welch added, that Sharon in a meeting with A/S Welch on October 11, had pledged that the GOI had no interest in interfering in Lebanon. Salloukh seconded this sentiment saying "we too don't want any violation from either side of the border."

Syrian-Lebanese relations "active"

15. (C) When A/S Welch asked the Foreign Minister about the state of the Lebanese-Syrian relationship, Foreign Minister Salloukh answered ambiguously, "active". He went on to say that Lebanon still respects Syria and deals with the Syrians with respect. "They are our neighbor, and we have many family as well as commercial connections with Syria. But they must deal with us with mutual respect." Salloukh said that Lebanon was in the process of reviewing its bilateral agreements with Syria. The Syrians maintain that many of the agreements are more beneficial to Lebanon than to Syria. This may be literally true when reviewing the texts. But the implementation of the agreements has been poor, Salloukh explained. Practically speaking, Salloukh acknowledged, there were no current problems between the two countries. Traffic was moving smoothly in both directions across the Lebanese-Syrian border. Salloukh stressed that Lebanon and Syrian had to discuss bilateral issues openly. "We need to open more doors." But Syria would have to accept that Lebanon's decisions would be for Lebanon and "made in Lebanon." Much, Salloukh said, will depend on the Mehlis report when it is released. "Mehlis will clarify everything."

The Mehlis report

16. (C N/F) FM Salloukh began his discussion of the upcoming Mehlis report by acknowledging that Lebanon is paralyzed in anticipation of the report. "Journalists come to me and ask, what will be in the report? How will we react? How can I react to a report that has not been written?" Salloukh said that he was concerned about two possible shocks to Lebanon emanating from the Mehlis report. One shock will come if the truth is revealed, and the guilty parties are identified. A different kind of shock will result if the report is ambiguous. Suspensions and doubts would remain and the country might remain paralyzed by uncertainty.

17. (C/NF) Salloukh also refuted newspaper articles that claimed he refused the PM's request that Salloukh draft a letter to the UNSYG requesting an extension of Mehlis' mandate. The Foreign Minister insisted that he had not been asked to draft such a request, and that he would not have refused the PM's request. But the Foreign Minister added that such a request should not be needed as the resolution mandating Mehlis' commission allowed for an extension by the Secretary-General without further requests. A/S Welch explained that a request from Lebanon for Mehlis' extension would be helpful to the United Nations. Salloukh said the Council of Ministers would discuss the issue of Mehlis' extension in its next meeting scheduled for October 13. But he added, "If the Secretary General needs a letter, I will not hesitate." The Foreign Minister went on to say that the GOL had no problem with UNSCR 1595, which created the Mehlis

commission. But he added that on "UNSCR 1559, we are working on a mechanism, and the U.S. understands or concerns better after our meetings in New York and Washington."

18. (C) A/S Welch assured Salloukh that the USG was prepared to support Lebanon in its efforts to create a new future for its people. We are also anticipating the results of the Mehlis investigation, A/S Welch explained. But the policy of the United States toward Lebanon would not change because of the report results.

19. (U) This message has been cleared by A/S Welch.

FELTMAN